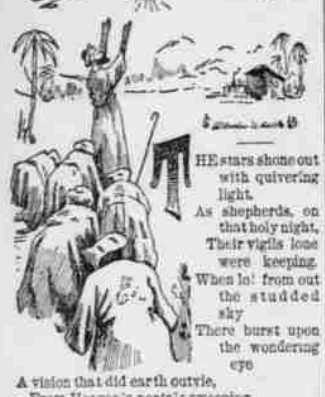
CHRISTMAS.



THE stars shone out with quivering light,
As shepherds, on that holy night,
Their vigils lone were keeping.
When lo! from out the studded sky
There burst upon the wondering eye
A vision that did earth outvie,
From Heaven's portals sweeping.

The shepherds all were sore amazed,
As tremblingly they upward gazed
At form angelic flying.
But hark! they hear the angel sing:
"Good tidings of great joy I bring,
For unto you is born a King,
He's in a manger lying."

Melodious rang the seraph's voice:
"Fear not, but evermore rejoice,
And cease fore'er your sighing,
For unto you is born this day,
In David's city, blest for aye,
The Saviour, Christ, the living Way,
Exult, with angels vying."

And now a host, a heavenly throng,
Sweeps all the air and earth along,
Triumphant chorus raising.
"To God be glory," now the cry,
"And praise to Him who reigns on high,"
"Good will to men," rings from the sky
From choir celestial praising.

A star more bright than all the rest
Shone out, that holiest night and best,
The wise men safely guiding.
And lo! the star before them went,
And to their path a radiance lent
To lead them where their steps were bent,
In worshipful confiding.

And as they came to lowly inn,
And found the new-born Babe within,
They joyed with joy exceeding.
And when they saw the holy child
Within the arms of virgin mild,
They praised, with lips pure, undefiled,
The Lord's most gracious leading.

Low at His feet they humbly fell,
And sought, in vain, their joy to tell,
But opened out their treasures.
Rich frankincense and myrrh they brought,
And gifts of gold with jewels wrought,
To lay before the Babe they'd sought,
Outspread in fullest measures.

Then let the bells their carols ring,
To praise the manger-cradled King,
The Christ of sacred story.
Let every heart, with men of old,
Pour out its frankincense and gold,
In loyalty and love untold,
To God, the King of Glory.

—Mrs. J. T. Greenleaf, in Good Housekeeping.

Mrs. Elmore's Christmas Dinner.

"SHALL we invite a few friends to take dinner with us on Christmas day?" said Mr. Elmore to his wife about a week before.

"Who is there in this little town that we would care to have?" was the reply. "As far as I know, we would only be bored by the presence of any of the families whose acquaintance we have formed."

"There's Lawyer Barker, and Mr. Benton, and old Judge Windom. They are all pleasant."

"Yes, but Mrs. Barker would talk about nothing but what she did, and how she lived, in Boston, and how unkind fortune is to cast the lot of so refined and delicate a person as herself in the west. Mrs. Benton would entertain me with her troubles with the hired girl and an enumeration of the children's ailments, and old Judge Windom would gurgle the soup, and put the turkey stuffing in his mouth with his knife. I would really rather just have a good dinner all to ourselves, since we cannot go home to eat it."

"Well, Mary, just as you feel about it," said Mr. Elmore, as he put on his overcoat preparatory to going to his office, "only I think it looks a little unsociable in us. We owe something to society here, even if it is a small western town. I think, dear," he added, as he kissed her fair cheek, "that you would be happier and more contented if you could only take a little more interest in people."

Mrs. Elmore sat thinking over the matter after her husband went out. He was a railroad official holding a very important position, and in receipt of a very large salary. His duties required him to be stationed at a small western town on the line of the railroad, and it was a great trial to himself, as well as to his beautiful and accomplished wife, that she was deprived of the pleasures and advantages of a city life to which she had been accustomed. She had always looked upon her stay as temporary, and to be endured as a period of waiting only. The people of any pretensions in the place who had called on her had all been uncongenial to her, as she really was a woman of very superior cultivation and accomplishments; and she had gradually withdrawn herself from social intercourse, and occupied herself with her books, her drawing and painting, and in keeping up a very extensive correspondence. Not that she felt herself above or any better than the people of the town—she was too genuinely a lady for that—but they were uninteresting to her; they appealed neither to her sympathies nor her taste, and she preferred her own society to theirs.

Mrs. Elmore was interrupted in her thoughts by the arrival of the pretty little seamstress, whom she had employed for several days. After she had given her some general directions about her work, a sudden thought struck Mrs. Elmore.

"What are you going to do on Christmas day?" she said.

"I suppose I shall just mope around all day in the boarding house; there is nothing to do and nowhere to go, and I have no acquaintances here."

"Where is your home?" said Mrs. Elmore, with genuine interest.

And then the pretty little seamstress told the rich and beautiful Mrs. Elmore all about her home and her childhood. It was a commonplace story, because there are so many thousand similar stories. Her father and mother had had a good start in life, were prosperous and respected. They had moved to the west just when the period of inflation began. She and her sisters had been sent to good schools, had taken music lessons and known every comfort in life. Then came the general financial crash; then the death of her father; then the hopeless struggle of her mother to keep the family together, ending in their going back east to her mother's family. There the seamstress had found a life of dependence unendurable, and she had taken up the occupation of sewing, and gradually worked her way westward till she had come to this place. She was bravely at work supporting herself and sending some money home to her mother regularly. But home life and the gay pleasures of youth she had been obliged to forego, and she did it with an uncomplaining cheerfulness that seemed really wonderful to Mrs. Elmore.

All morning Mrs. Elmore kept thinking over the story of the little seamstress. She wondered how she herself would feel placed in similar circumstances. Then she observed her more narrowly, and noted how refined the young girl was, in her personal appearance; how soft and pretty and well kept was her hair; how neat her linen collar, how white and beautiful her hands. Again and again she drew her into conversation, and noticed how sensible she was, how correct her language, and how modest and good tempered her every act and word revealed her to be. A new train of thought had been started in Mrs. Elmore's mind. When her husband came home that evening she said to him:

"You said this morning that it would look a little unsociable in us to have a Christmas dinner all by ourselves, and also that I would be happier if I took more interest in people. I have been interesting myself in people to-day, and I want to have a company to Christmas dinner of people in whom I am interested."

"And who are they, pray?" said Mr. Elmore, opening his eyes very wide.

"They are some young persons who work hard, and are good mannered and virtuous and intelligent, and yet have no homes of their own nor any social advantages. I want to invite of married people only the good old clergyman and his wife; then I shall ask the two young ladies who teach in the public schools; Miss Green, the telegraph operator; Miss Ray, who keeps that little book store, and the little Miss Morris, whom you have seen sewing for me this week. Then I want you to invite all the clerks in your office. They are nice young fellows, and I am sure they will enjoy it."

Great was the joy and delight of all the aforementioned parties to receive in due time an invitation to dine on Christmas day with the beautiful and rich Mrs. Elmore, who was generally supposed to be so aristocratic and exclusive. There was a fixing over of garments, and a buying of neckties and ruches, and a flutter of happy hearts in preparation for the unusual occasion.

Mrs. Elmore found an unexpected interest and delight in arranging for an elegant Christmas dinner. She had a chance to use for the first time since she had been in the west her whole dinner set of china. She took unusual pains in arranging her parlors so that there should be everything to amuse and entertain her guests—cards, portfolios of engravings, games, stereoscopic views, books, etc. When the happy company assembled a more polite and agreeable set of young people could scarcely be found. With rare tact did Mrs. Elmore play the part of hostess, making them all feel at ease and acquainted. Mr. Elmore had heartily entered into her plan, and his clerks were delighted to find that the somewhat severe business manager could be the most jovial of hosts. There was not the least air of condescension in the manner of either host or hostess, and it was a cheering oasis in all their hard-working lives to be made to feel that the rich and fortunate took a kindly interest in them.

But the prettiest and most attractive lady in the crowd was little Miss Morris. Her dress was only a soft black cashmere, but she had a white illusion bow at her throat, with a red carnation and a geranium leaf fastened in it, which set off well the fineness of her complexion, while a few geranium leaves adorned her soft, brown hair.

Just before dinner, while the whole company were engaged in lively talk and mirth, there was a knock at the door, and Mr. Elmore was called to welcome an old college chum, Mr. Fred Longley, whom he had not seen for years, and who had stopped off on his way to the far west to spend a few days. He was quite an old bachelor, and expressed himself as greatly dismayed at happening in on a party of gay young people, instead of finding his friend alone in "the western wilds," as he styled the locality. But there was no help for it, and he was soon doing his best to make himself agreeable to the company.

After a delightful evening, when the hour for breaking up arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Elmore were quite surprised to notice that Mr. Longley was preparing to accompany some one of the ladies home, and they scarcely knew whether to feel pleased or embarrassed on finding that little Miss Morris was the lady thus honored.

"I fear we have misled Fred by this party," said Mr. Elmore. "I don't exactly know how he would feel if he knew he was escorting a little seamstress home. At all events we must tell him. His magnificent mother and fastidious sisters would be horrified if they knew it."

"Miss Morris is both prettier and more of a lady than his haughty sisters. However, I will explain my Christmas party when he returns," was Mrs. Elmore's reply, "so that he may fully understand matters. He shall not be the victim of any misunderstanding."

Mr. Fred Longley soon returned, and as he took off his gloves and furs he said:

"Well, I declare, you have some nice sensible and pretty young ladies in this little burg. Pray, who is Miss Morris? I really am quite captivated by her."

Mrs. Elmore explained at length her idea in giving the party. She wished to show attention and afford some really refined social pleasure to worthy young people who were earning their own living, and whom society too often neglected. For her own part, she said, she had been surprised to find such refinement and intelligence in the little company of faithful workers. She liked them far better than pretentious people of fashion, and she meant in the future to cultivate their acquaintance.

Mr. Longley listened with great interest but made no comment. However, the Elmores noticed that in a day or two he made an opportunity to call on pretty little Miss Morris. On his way back from the west he stopped off again "to see his friends, the Elmores."

"I really believe that Fred Longley is only making this an excuse," said Mrs. Elmore to her husband. "I am impressed with the idea that he wants to see Miss Morris again."

"Well, he is of age," was her husband's reply, "and has an independent fortune. He can certainly do as he pleases."

And the upshot of the whole affair was that on the next Christmas day Mr. and Mrs. Elmore took dinner at the elegant city home of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Longley. Little Miss Morris as Mrs. Longley was a beauty in her handsome toilet and with her happy face. And her mother was there, too—a sweet-faced old lady in black silk—who took Mrs. Elmore aside and said: "All this happiness and good fortune we owe to your kindness a year ago in asking my Mary to your house to a Christmas dinner."—Chicago Saturday Evening Herald.

"SAY! AIN'T WE IN IT?"

A DELIGHTFUL EVENING.

Ingratitude.

I walked some dozen miles or so
Up to my waist in drifting snow,
And got myself frost-bitten,
To get a maid a Christmas tree.
And then she hung on it, for me,
What do you think?—A mitten.
—Brooklyn Life.

Waiting for the Holidays.

B. Troth—Shall it be the jeweler's or the milliner's next?

Miss Feaney—Well, you go to the jeweler's and I'll visit the milliner.—Jeweler's Weekly.

"Only Watching."

A RECONCILIATION.

Happy Effect of a Generous Wish Sent to an Estranged Friend.

Christmas eve the dull sky was roofed with leaden clouds. A noticeable hush seemed to voice, as it were, a snowstorm. Snow birds came flocking from everywhere—little homeless creatures welcoming the coming storm. Along after dark flakes began falling and the ground was soon white with winter's bloom. Next morning, when I looked forth, my eyes beheld a forest of pearl. The trees had grown old in a single night, as if from the fright of the storm. At midnight the wind blew and awoke me, when I heard the trees moaning, and gazing through the window I saw a tall elm, which grew near, throwing his limbs about as would a wild man his arms.

But a blue sky followed this night of storm, when the stars one by one melted into the blaze of the sun as he, next morn, pressed his warm kiss of light upon the world's white cheeks. It was a happy Christmas. The spirit of a Nazarene, who, when He fell asleep, woke up the world, seemed to possess all hearts, whose good will overflowed all speech.

On the first day of December a friend and I fell out, and it seemed at the time we would never be able to fall in again. Time went on—never knew him to do otherwise; that is why so many people are behind time.

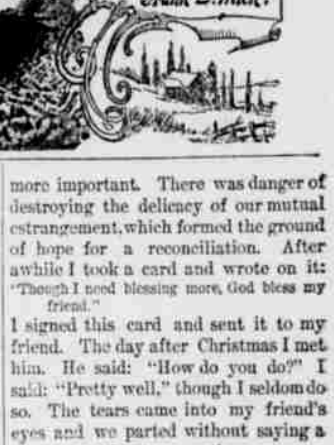
On Christmas day I kept thinking of my estranged friend; so I made up my mind to send him some token to let him know if our friendship were dead its memory still lived. Now, what should I send him? The value of a gift was not the consideration. Its appropriateness was far more important. There was danger of destroying the delicacy of our mutual estrangement, which formed the ground of hope for a reconciliation. After awhile I took a card and wrote on it:

"Though I need blessing more, God bless my friend."

I signed this card and sent it to my friend. The day after Christmas I met him. He said: "How do you do?" I said: "Pretty well," though I seldom do so. The tears came into my friend's eyes and we parted without saying a word more than our greeting.

In a few days he wrote me a letter, saying he *had* planned to get even with me. "Now, the debt of our offense is settled. You taught me that a little generosity and kindness to a foe is more powerful to overcome him than would be all the hatred of the world." I read this and then thought how grateful the world ought to be that it has had one disinterested lover, the influence of whose example grows in power and magnitude with each returning Christmas.—Lee Fairchild.

A RAILWAY KING.



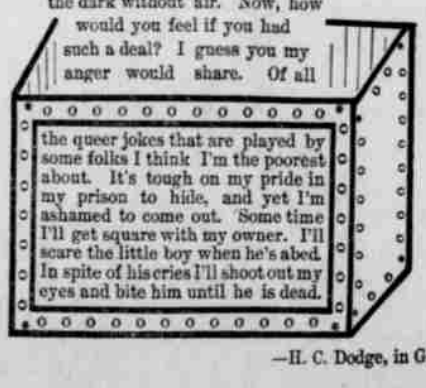
Papa—Why, Jimmie, why do you cry? Aren't you pleased with all these lovely ears Santa Claus has brought?

Jimmie—Boo-hoo—I want anuzzer one!—Harper's Young People.

SANTA CLAUS is almost as blind as his little friend Cupid. The old man seldom sees the chimneys of the poor.—Judge.

POOR JACK.

I am Jack in the Box. If you press on the locks I jump out and do all the rest. I'm owned by a boy who takes wonderful joy in making you practice the test. From a stocking that hung by the chimney I sprung. St. Nick put me "in it," they say; so if I am bad, or my looks make you mad, it isn't my fault, anyway. The girls big and small don't like me at all, and scream when I show them my face; the babies, oh, dear, get spasms of fear and yell when I pop from my case. For giving such shocks I am squeezed in my box to squat in the dark without air. Now, how would you feel if you had such a deal? I guess you my anger would share. Of all the queer jokes that are played by some folks I think I'm the poorest about. It's tough on my pride in my prison to hide, and yet I'm ashamed to come out. Some time I'll get square with my owner. I'll scare the little boy when he's abed. In spite of his cries I'll shoot out my eyes and bite him until he is dead.



—H. C. Dodge, in Goodall's Sun.